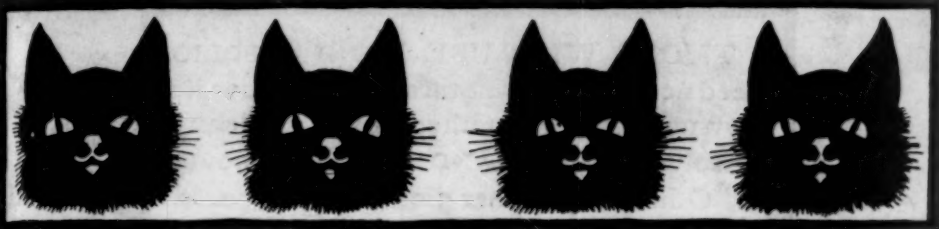

NOVEMBER, 1905.

A Story in Clay
$100 Prize
James O. Fagan.

Cupid's Rummage Sale
Irving Williams.

Granny
Felix Fellows.

At Briny Ranch
Stephen Chalmers.

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Henry Oyen.

The Greatest Nonsense in the World
John Earl.

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A Story in Clay.*

BY JAMES O. FAGAN.

N a day late in the fall of the year 1900, a young Scotchman appeared on the streets of a Western town, in the guise of a peddler. His stock in trade consisted of a small ornament, or model, in clay, representing a young Highland lassie. The figure was in a kneeling posture and the girl appeared to be looking up at some crags which formed the back, or frame, of the ornament.

The expression on the face — indeed, the whole design — was so strikingly beautiful and realistic that the young Scotchman and his handiwork attracted considerable attention.

Moreover, his method of hardening, polishing and coloring the clay was something of a mystery, even to connoisseurs. It was also noticeable that the name Maggie was invariably to be found cut into the pedestal of every example of the young Scotchman's plastic skill.

Before long, several well-known citizens endeavored to cultivate the man's acquaintance with the idea of learning something about his history. To these gentlemen he was extremely polite and deferential, but his replies to the kindest enquiries were either

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evasive or entirely incomprehensible. To one of these gentlemen he answered as follows:

"Where do I come from? I do not know. Yes, my name is McGregor — Ian McGregor. I try to remember things. It is such a beautiful world, don't you think so?"

Then an effort was made to induce him to try his skill on some subject other than Maggie, but with very little success, although occasionally he would so far vary his work as to model daintiest little hands and feet, but they were all unmistakably inspired by the same beautiful Scotch ideal. In this way the young modeller sold his ornaments on the streets for nearly a year before his customers awoke to the fact that the man was mentally unbalanced. Then the authorities thought proper to have him examined by an alienist, whose diagnosis of the case seemed to indicate that it was a very extraordinary instance of mental paralysis and that Ian McGregor was probably suffering from a severe shock of some kind.

He was intelligent and sane in a certain way, but all his faculties and ideas seemed to be bound up and absorbed in his occupation of clay modelling, and, as one of the doctors remarked, "Maggie seems to be the centre of some action or tragedy from which the man's mental activity is unable to break away."

So, finally they consigned McGregor to the State Hospital for further examination and treatment.

. . . . . .

Dr. Richard Hoyt of the State Hospital for the Insane, who had received a communication from a New York Detective Agency, making enquiries about a much-sought-for man by the name of Ian McGregor, sat at his desk reading the following letter from this very man, who was one of his most interesting patients. It was dated and addressed from the Power House of the institution:

> I understand that you are not yet prepared to recommend my discharge from this Institution. In submitting to your decision, I have no word of protest to trouble you with, but before settling down to my duties for another term, I wish to write you a letter of thanks, coupled with an unusual request. To begin with, I wish to assure you that I shall always look upon these premises

as holy, sacred ground. You and your noble assistants seem to surround us, the unfortunate inmates, with infinite tenderness and pity, together with never ceasing vigilance and care. This cottage plan is surely an inspired idea. You lead us from Cottage to Cottage, up from darkness and oblivion to light and liberty, by a series of the happiest, most skilful gradations. That you are, yourself, the heart and soul of this noble system, I am well aware, for, only a few days ago, I stood in your office, and noticed hanging on the wall a picture of the poet Tennyson, with these noble lines underneath:

"I held it truth with him who sings,
To one clear harp in divers tones
That men may rise on stepping stones,
Of their dead selves to higher things."

You perceive, Dr. Hoyt, my memory is perfectly true and clear and, believe me, I am now altogether sane and in my right mind. And yet, in spite of my attempted resignation, I cannot conceal from you the fact that I write to you to-night with deepest earnestness and emotion, pleading for my freedom. I cannot steal away from here like a thief in the night, my heart is too full of thanksgiving. I am too grateful for that. On the contrary, I must go on my way with your kind wishes and your blessing. So, to further my interests and to enlarge your sympathy, I desire to make a confession. I am in love with a young girl who lives in the Highlands of Scotland. I was torn from her side by a fate surely the most cruel and heartrending in the history of human misfortune. Now for the story and the method of it:

Behind the Power House where I work as Assistant Engineer, there is a deserted shed. With cunning and secrecy such as lunatics frequently manifest, I probably took possession of this shed over a year ago. To-day when you throw open the door a strange panorama is before you. It is a bit of landscape or scenery in miniature, modelled in clay and other materials. It represents a piece of the coast line in the northeast of Scotland. Some time ago, as my identity and consciousness returned to me, I recognized with the greatest surprise in this strange model the country of my birth and the home of my childhood.

With much technical skill, with minute geographical knowledge and, I think you will add, with the art of a magician, your patient has made use of materials such as clay, sand, rock, plants, water, and electricity, and the result of his curious fancy and labor is a piece of wonderland.

Now, Dr. Hoyt, I beg you to come over to the Power

House this evening that you may examine your patient's handiwork while you listen to the story that must have inspired its creation. Meantime, please do not be surprised that I now sign myself,

Very gratefully,

IAN MCGREGOR,

"King of the Cragsmen."

Dr. Hoyt was accustomed to receive appealing letters from his patients, but this one was, he thought, decidedly out of the ordinary. So that evening, according to the man's request, he called upon McGregor at the Power House, and together they repaired to the old shed.

The Doctor was prepared by the letter for some kind of a surprise, but when once inside the building his astonishment knew no bounds. But before he had time to express himself in words, McGregor hastened to remark:

"Dr. Hoyt, this visit is evidence of great kindness and interest on your part. Kindly seat yourself on this little platform while with this pointer in my hand I at once proceed with my story.

"The scene before you represents a piece of the coast line in the northeast of Scotland. At our feet is Chanonry Point, with its famous lighthouse. You notice it is built of little blocks of granite, and the revolving light in the tower is in good working order. The water in the Moray Firth and in the Channel before us comes from yonder faucet and flows out again through that narrow defile into the Caledonian Canal at the other end of the shed. On the other side of the Channel before us is Fort George. You can see the diminutive sentries in their boxes, and a company of Highlanders on the parade ground, and that cluster of little white tents on the hillside is a field hospital. Turning now to the right, we have Culloden Moor, where the battle was fought in '45, and beyond it, at the head of the Firth of Inverness, is a representation of the beautiful capital of the Highlands with its romantic castle, where, if you remember, Macbeth entertained the generous Duncan in grewsome fashion. That picturesque lodge back on the hills yonder is the seat of the Master of Lovat, whose ancestor was out with Prince Charlie.

"Now, coming back to the left hand, the scene is of a different nature. Here we have a rugged, rock-bound coast, a land of crags

and cliffs, stretching away to Cromarty Point on the horizon. The only relief to this rugged outline is this short stretch of sandy beach curving inward from the lighthouse to the village of Rosemarkie. On the margin of this lovely bay many fishermen have built their houses, and here are a few of their little fishing boats, or cobles, riding peacefully at anchor a few inches from the shore.

"In this little cottage, which I now touch with my pointer, I was born. At the back of the village, and running up along the coast, you see a long succession of crags and precipices. For generations these crags have been the playground of the Highland lads from surrounding villages. Once in five years they hold a festival of Highland games in this vicinity, sometimes in one village, sometimes in another. They call it a Crag Carnival, the principal event being a crag-climbing contest, the prize for which is a valuable climbers' outfit and the coveted title 'King of the Cragsmen.'

"When nineteen years of age, I won this trophy. Now, close to my birthplace here, is the seat of Robert Saltoun, the Master of Ethie. At the time I speak of, he had one son, a handsome, adventurous little fellow, some ten or twelve years old, and a daughter, Maggie, who was two years my junior. Maggie and I were classmates in the Academy of a neighboring town, and I really cannot remember the time when we were not closest friends and lovers. The Laird and his family used every means in their power to put a stop to this youthful and romantic attachment, but their efforts were altogether in vain. As for the Laird, he was a good deal of a tyrant and very little love was lost between him and the villagers. He was a man of ungovernable temper, and any opposition to his will was to him simply incomprehensible. When he found out that he could neither frighten me nor put a stop to our secret correspondence, his anger was indescribable, and more than once he threatened me with bodily injury. Finally, he used his power as the landlord of my widowed mother, to banish me from the village. I had shown considerable talent in modelling and carving in clay and other materials, so the Laird put me in the way of obtaining a scholarship at a School of Design in Edinburgh. For my mother's sake, I studied hard and took high honors at this school, and before long I began to make a name for

myself among artists and others who were glad to patronize a student of unusual talent.

"Now, Dr. Hoyt, you perceive how cleverly those crags and ravines have been carved out of the bank of clay which was thrown up against the south wall of the shed. The little ferns, the low bushes, the ledges where the crows build their nests, the lone rocks out in the water yonder where the sea fowl love to congregate, are evidences of your patient's remarkable memory and skill, and all contribute to the completeness of this life-like scene. Well, one day, on my way home from Edinburgh to enjoy a short vacation, I crossed the ferry at Chanonry Point and walked over these links to the village. The few people I happened to meet were in a state of great excitement. The Laird's only son and heir, young Ralph Saltoun, had been missing for nearly two days, and his whereabouts, some two miles from the village, had been discovered only a few hours before my arrival. As the story was told to me, the boy had wandered away among the hills and, being overtaken by a severe storm, had sought shelter under a ledge high up among the crags.

"Then torrents of rain had fallen, and finally a landslide had left the boy's retreat almost isolated from the surrounding crags.

"Without a moment's delay I rushed home, secured my rope and my dirk and hurried to the scene. Upon my arrival, I was informed that for some time the best cragsmen in the village had been wearying their limbs in vain efforts to rescue the lad. From above, as you can see, the ledge was unapproachable on account of the great forehead of crag that hangs over it. So most of the rescuers were trying to scale a precipitous mountain wall on the east side.

"After looking over the ground, I determined to try it from the opposite side, that is, from the west, although, as you can see, the prospect was not very encouraging. So I swiftly made my way up this ravine and was soon scrambling up the smooth face of this clay parapet which runs sheer up for one hundred and fifty feet and ends abruptly in this razor-like ridge. To all appearances this climb of mine was a daring and foolhardy feat, and the villagers who were spread out among the rocks and on the seashore beneath, looked up with astonishment and alarm. Even should I manage

to reach the crest of the ridge at which I was aiming, they thought my labor would certainly be in vain, for between its jagged summit and the boy there was this gorge, fully twenty feet across. However, with unflinching courage, I persevered. I dug out step after step with my dirk. Now I gained a few feet, then I slipped back a few, but still I pressed upward with feverish energy. At one time I would be flattened out against the face of the cliff, clinging for my life to crannies and little ledges, and the next moment, with more favorable surface I would be doubled up like a caterpillar and scrambling upwards with the joy in my heart that only a cragsman can understand. In this way, after thirty minutes' perilous climbing, I reached the crest of the ridge which, as you see, strikes up into the air like the fin from a fish's back. On its razor-like edge I sat astride for a minute or two in order to study my surroundings. I shouted to the boy, who was only twenty feet away on the other side of the gorge. He was evidently exhausted from exposure and hunger, and I could hardly hear his faint replies to my shouts of encouragement. I was then at least three hundred feet from the base of the cliff. Time was pressing, so I immediately signalled to the cheering people below that I was going to jump the gorge. It was already late in the evening, another storm was brewing, and I knew that, in all probability, the ledge and the overhanging crag would slide down during the night. The sea birds, disturbed from their accustomed haunts, were clamoring noisily around me, and far away on the reefs a fog bell was pealing its dismal monotone.

"Above me, on the overhanging crag, the Laird and some of his men had crawled out and were anxiously watching my movements, while below at the base of the mountain I could just distinguish Maggie and a number of her girl companions, all gazing upward with heart-breaking eagerness and suspense.

"This glimpse of Maggie watching my efforts renewed my courage and strength, and I went to work with redoubled energy levelling off the razor-like edge on which I had been seated. In this way, I soon made a tolerably flat and secure run of about thirty feet. And, Dr. Hoyt, while I was digging away with my dirk, I can tell you my mind was busy. I said to myself, 'This jump means death. Well, what to me is life without Maggie? If

I fail and fall she will not be ashamed of me, she will know that I would have rescued the boy if I could, and that I do this to consecrate my undying affection. As for her father, the Laird, with all his money and his acres, he is nothing but a heartless tyrant, and so, live or die, it will be something to lay him and his proud family under tribute in this way to the son of a fisherman.'

"So, bracing my energies with these thoughts, I raced to the edge of the narrow spur and sprang straight out for the ledge. I fell short, but only a few inches, and my dirk, which I had held ready for the purpose, was buried up to the hilt in the bank. It held fast, and in this way I stuck to the face of the crag like a fly on a pane of glass. Then, with a supreme effort, I swung myself up on to the ledge, and a second later I had the boy in my arms.

"What followed is quickly explained. By means of ropes they lowered a man from the top of the crag. Of course, he couldn't swing in under the ledge, but he caught my rope and I hauled him in. Then the man and the boy were hoisted up in safety and the rope was lowered again for me. It was almost dark, and the rain was falling in torrents. On my way up, as I was fending myself away from the crag, from some inconceivable cause the rope broke, and from that moment, until a short time ago, when, by degrees, I recovered my understanding, I must have been asleep or in some very peculiar mental condition. At any rate, the interval has been a blank in my life, and you can now easily understand my intense anxiety to return to Scotland."

Dr. Hoyt had been listening to this interesting narrative with profound attention, and at its conclusion he hastened to shake hands with McGregor. He assured him of his heartiest sympathy and assistance, and then added:

"As for this model of yours, it is certainly the most wonderful and interesting exhibition of the kind I have ever looked upon. In fact, I do not think any sane person would be capable of such a marvelous demonstration of patience and technical skill. Many of our patients daily furnish us with curious examples of unlooked-for and mysterious mental capacity, but your handiwork and your story surpass anything of the kind in the history of this Institution. I assure you we shall take great care of it.

"But now, McGregor, I have something to add to your story

that I know you will listen to with the greatest interest. It is a newspaper clipping which I received from New York. It is taken from the Inverness *Courier*." Then Dr. Hoyt read aloud the following paragraph:

THE McGREGOR INCIDENT.

The death of Robert Saltoun, the Master of Ethie, has added another interesting chapter to the McGregor incident.

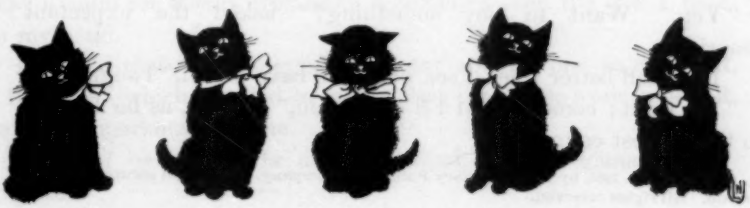
Highland readers of this newspaper do not need to be reminded of this famous story of heroism and mystery. That some one cut the rope is an indisputable fact, but it is also true that Robert Saltoun was tried for the crime and acquitted by a jury of his countrymen. Perhaps no individual in the history of the Scottish Highlands ever suffered so much from public indignation and scorn as the late Master of Ethie. For our part, we cannot believe that Robert Saltoun was half as bad a man as his enemies have painted him. On the widowed mother of the young man he bestowed a life pension. Ian McGregor recovered from his physical injuries, but his mental powers continuing disturbed and unbalanced, the Laird, at considerable expense, sent him abroad in the hope that change of scene would be of benefit to him.

The young fellow died, or was reported to have died, while abroad, and so the affair was allowed to rest. But now persistent rumors are heard that there has been some kind of a death-bed confession to the effect that young McGregor was shamelessly deserted in a foreign country and that the report of his death was a fabrication. Furthermore, it is said that members of the Laird's family are now advertising extensively in the United States in their efforts to locate the young man. Thus mystery is added to mystery, and further developments are anxiously awaited.

About a year after the discharge of Ian McGregor from the Hospital, Dr. Hoyt received from him a most interesting letter with an enclosure as follows:

MARRIED.

On the 5th inst., at Raddery Hall, Inverness-shire, Ian McGregor of Rosemarkie, to Margaret, only surviving child and heiress of the late Robert Saltoun, Esq., of Ethie and Robindale, in the County of Ross.



Cupid's Rummage Sale.*

BY IRVING WILLIAMS.

BEING on a visit to Vanity Fair not long ago, I chanced to turn from Folly Avenue into Fancy Street, and had passed only a few doors south when my attention was attracted by this sign in a dingy show window:

CUPID'S RUMMAGE SALE.

Impelled by curiosity to investigate this novelty, I pushed open the door and entered. A jangling bell was set into a crazy frenzy by the opening of the door, and as I became accustomed to the half light of the room, I saw coming towards me a little sprite, and no introduction was necessary to apprise me that I was face to face with the God of Love.

But what a dirty face — a very earthly little god to be sure! His hands and face were grimy, unprosaically dirty; his bare feet — I might say his also bare feet, for they presented no exception to the rest of his body in its relationship to clothing — looked much as any little chap's might who had brought the cows home and had alternately kicked up the dust of the highway and scuffled his feet through the refreshing, dew-laden grass at the roadside; while there were, undeniably, some soot-covered wrecks of cobwebs floating from his wings, which otherwise needed pluming, — an extremely rummagy-looking God of Love.

"Gone into the rummage-sale business?" I queried, by way of opening negotiations.

"Yep. Want to buy something?" asked the expectant proprietor.

"I can tell better when I see what you have to sell," I suggested.

"All right; come on and I'll show you," he said, as he led me to the nearest counter.

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It was piled high with goods of all kinds in the promiscuous jumble effect that is common to rummage-sale emporiums. There was also the air or atmosphere of general dilapidation which prevails in such places. Faded colors, frayed edges and a repelling odor of mustiness were the chief factors of the general impression conveyed to me by my surroundings.

Tickets bearing prices printed in a cramped, stubby hand, evidently contorted with a bad pen and dust-thickened ink, were attached to each article, commending the store at once to the devotee of "shopping made simple" or "one price for everybody."

Lifting a flimsy-looking piece of material, marked "10 cents," having a somewhat attractive lustre where it was not worn threadbare, I inquired, "What's this?"

"That? Why, that's a glamour," said the salesman.

The thing was full of holes, and as I held it up between us it showed the effects of rough and disastrous usage.

"A glamour!" I was frankly puzzled. "Pray, what's a glamour, and what's it used for?"

"A glamour's a glamour. It's used to cover up things that might be objectionable. That glamour you're holding there is one I used last fall on a couple that I wasn't sure would suit each other very well. I worked it pretty strong, too; and, say"—the little salesman came nearer and stood on tip-toe as he whispered, impressively: "I was afraid it would all be worn off before the wedding day; and it wasn't more than a week after, either, before it was full of holes, just like it is now, and thrown into the rag-bag. I saw they were through with it, and, as it was mine, anyway, I brought it here."

"It ain't the only one, either," he continued, as he pulled out another disreputable-looking, shawl-like article and held it up so that I could see it was even more dilapidated than the one I held in my hand.

I noticed that it was tagged "5 cents" and the one in my hand "10 cents," which recalled to me the fact that these were supposed to have a marketable value.

"But of what use is a second-hand, ragged glamour?" I inquired.

"Oh, lots," declared Cupid. "You have freckles, I notice. Just hold a piece of that glamour over your face and look in the glass."

When I did so the freckles were gone, and I beheld my countenance, with an apple-blossom complexion, beaming upon me. The glamour itself seemed to be transparent, and I thought, "What a veil this would make for some ugly duckling who knew she was ugly and cared."

I bought the dilapidated glamour, of course not because I had any designs upon the freckles, but just to encourage a little shopkeeper who needed a bath — and a bath-robe. While he was tying up my purchase in a page from a back number of some matrimonial advertisement sheet, I laid hands on a garment that resembled nothing so much as a last year's overcoat, one which had not been carefully put away, but showed signs of having been appreciated by a colony of moths.

"Rather an ordinary-looking overcoat to charge five dollars for," I commented, as I noted the price.

"Put it on and look in the glass," suggested Cupid.

I have a pair of warped legs, I stoop somewhat, and age has traced some lines on my face and bleached streaks in the hair over my temples; so, when I observed a dapper-looking, straight, well-formed chap, with a face ten years younger than I knew mine to be, and with hair as black as coal, I did not recognize the apparition as myself until I noted that its movements corresponded with my own and it looked as astonished as I felt.

"I'll take it," I said, in unabashed admission of my susceptibility to flattery.

Cupid laughed a happy little giggle as he took my money and offered to wrap up the garment.

"Guess I'll wear it," I said off-handedly.

"It's a pretty warm day to wear an overcoat," said the salesman, as he looked out of the window where a ninety-degree summer sun warranted his opinion. "Besides," he added, "that coat doesn't look as good to all as it does to some."

"What do you mean?" I demanded.

"Nothing — that is, only —" Cupid stammered, in evident embarrassment. "You see it's only meant to fool one person at a

time and, as you're the one just at present, it will only look like a seedy overcoat to other people."

"Why didn't you tell me that before you sold it to me?"

"You didn't ask me to," he answered, and, as he saw I was getting angry, he trembled with fear.

I melted, for who does not before frightened Love, and, as the ludicrousness of my own vanity struck me, I laughed, — and Love laughed with me.

"Tell me about it," I demanded, as I pulled off the coat and saw by the glass that the parentheses of my legs were restored and the sundry marks of time were on duty again.

"That coat," said Cupid, "was one I had made for a rich old bachelor who was trying to win a handsome young widow. Although he was very rich, she could not overcome her repugnance to his age and appearance. When I gave him this coat she saw only a man of middle age and he soon won her. After the wedding, I found that he had discarded the coat, and it lay in a closet all last winter and the moths got into it. It's yours now though, and of course you will cherish it and keep the naughty moths out of it."

The thought of my five dollars aroused my wrath again and I exclaimed, "You little scamp, you're not going to hold me to such a fraudulent sale as that?"

"Why not? You will have the satisfaction of knowing that your money will go to a good cause. All rummage sales are conducted for charitable purposes, you know."

My curiosity as to what charitable object was to be profited by Cupid's rummage sale quenched my anger, and I asked him what he expected to do with his funds.

"Buy dog buttons for puppy lovers," he declared solemnly.

"Sure?" I demanded.

"As sure as I am that you bit like a fish after Lent on that overcoat," and the rogue grinned at me.

"Then keep the five, but be careful how you try to work me again. What's that coffee-grinder for over there?"

"That's no coffee-grinder. It's a sonnet machine. Makes love sonnets. Belonged to a fellow that almost wore it out before he got married. Never touched the thing after his honeymoon had

passed the first quarter. I found it on the top shelf in their pantry the other day." While delivering this running explanation of the thing, he was peering into it, tightening a screw or two and trying without success to turn the handle. "It's awful rusty. Looks as if it might have been thrown at a cat or something. Handle's bent. 'Twon't turn. Here, you see if you can't straighten it," and the love sonnet machine was thrust into my hands.

It was dirty and dusty and rusty. I looked at the handle and saw which way it should extend when normal, and then, with a judicious pull, I re-established the proper attitude.

"There, that's right," exclaimed Cupid; "now turn the handle," and he danced about like a boy who is anxious to see how a new top "goes."

I grasped the handle and began to turn. Immediately a cracked, wheezy voice began to sputter something which sounded like this:

"O sweetest st st st t t t t * * ever *
My li li (squeak) e e e ch spt!!"

"Say, the thing needs oil," said Cupid, with an air of discovery, as if our ears had not been assailed with the obvious fact. He hurried to the back of the room and quickly returned with a can which bore the inscription, "Oil — for troubled waters. Guaranteed to reduce breakers on the stormy sea of love." He tipped it up until the oil slopped generously from the spout of the can, deluging the love-sonnet machine, which I had wisely set in an open space on the floor.

"There, that ought to help her," said he, as he straightened up and looked at me, expectantly. Taking my cue and the handle, I began to grind again. The oil for troubled waters proved efficacious for rusty love-sonnet machines as well; for, with only a little occasional complaining, it produced the following:

"O sweetest maid, that lover ever knew,
My life in willing service will be spent
If, in my serving, I may serve but you;
And I will gladly sit in sweet content
Most humbly at thy footstool, dearest one,
And never from thy side a moment roam
When busy day is past and night has come
And I am safely with my love at home.
This world would be, with thee and me alone,
Just right, and I would never miss the rest,
Or know that there were others I had known.
Come, sweetheart, won't you put me to the test?
Just try me, you need never fear regret.
Just try me; come, just try me, little pet."

As it finished, Cupid became thoughtful. "It's odd," he said, "how they change after they get 'em. Do you know, I never saw a fellow so daffy about a girl as this one was, and he pretty nearly wore the machine out grinding sonnets; all having that same sentiment, too, — never leave her; devoted slave, and all that. Fact was they hadn't been married a month before he stayed out all night, and to-day he's the most inveterate clubman I know, while she's worn to a glamour sitting up nights waiting for him. Take the machine along if you want it. I'll throw it in on the overcoat, just as they sometimes do with gold watches."

Returning to my investigations, I next picked up a pill-box, or what looked like one. "Blandishments" it contained, according to the label on the cover. I opened it and found it half full of little brown pellets.

"Well," I asked, as I saw that Cupid was watching me with quizzical interest, what are these?"

"Take one," he suggested.

"Not for me," I declared. "How do I know that these are not dog buttons, for which you seem to have a partiality?"

He took my banter seriously, and there was reproach in his voice as he protested. "Now, honest, you don't suppose I'd let you hurt yourself, do you?"

"Seems to me, I recall a little transaction in which the welfare of my pocket-book suffered at your hands."

"But I'm not asking you to buy these. They won't hurt you a bit. G'wan, try one!"

"What are they for? I don't want to take something without knowing what it's meant for."

"Oh, you're afraid! Let me have them. I'll take the whole box," and he stretched out his hand.

"You'll guarantee they are harmless," I said, as I picked up one of the pellets.

"Yes, honor bright," and he watched me as I examined the pill.

It was such a little thing, so harmless-looking; my curiosity was so aroused, and besides I have a weakness for not liking to take a dare, so I plumped it into my mouth and gulped it down.

Immediately Cupid began to dance with delight, and he watched me as if he expected to see me blow up or turn into a green lizard.

As I watched his antics I began to feel an irresistible desire to caress him and to shower him with loving praises. My old self revolted at this new desire to pet the grimy little god; and as these counter impulses contended, I felt that I would choke because of the rush of words to my tongue.

As Cupid saw me opposing my will to the influence of the pill, he became alarmed and cried, "Let it out! Let it out or you'll bust!"

I opened my lips and something like the following was the result: "Oh, isn't he a little darling? Such a bright boy. I do so love children! He is certainly a child to be proud of. Such rosy cheeks! Such sweet curls," etc.

Cupid squealed with joy and danced back out of my reach to escape me as I moved towards him to caress according to the impulse which possessed me. As I pressed him closely he sprang lightly to the counter, and from there quickly scrambled to the highest shelf along the wall, from which he made grimaces at me as I stood below and vowed eloquently that I had never before encountered such infantile perfection.

We kept this up until he got tired and wanted to come down, and then he said: "When you get through with your Romeoing I'll be glad to descend from the balcony. If you've had enough, you can go back there to the water cooler and drink nine swallows without breathing, just as you would to cure the hiccoughs."

I'd had enough from the start, and had only played Romeo to his Juliet because I could not help it, so I made use of the water cure at once and found it effective.

Cupid bound me by solemn promise not to do him harm and dropped down from his "balcony."

"What in the name of distraction are those pills for, anyway?" I asked, as I poked the box aside gingerly.

"Blandishments? I use them mostly in cases where one of the parties is a widow or widower and there are children to be considered. That is what is left of a box I used on a fellow I was trying to tie up to a widow with seven children. He didn't seem to understand children much. Got tongue-tied when they were around. When I fed him one of these, though, you should have heard him limber up. You were nothing but a whisper compared

to him. He won out in less than two weeks. After the wedding, however, he quit using the pills, and now he takes a broomstick instead. There were this many left in the box, so I added them to my sale."

A further review of the stock disclosed a pair of spectacles that made crooked eyes appear straight; an old wheezy bellows that had once produced "hot air" with sufficient effectiveness to win a rich bachelor; a plaster that would make of the freakiest nose a model of Grecian perfection; a box of powder that would cause the unfortunate upon whom it fell to forget about business, friends, money, and all else but the one object whom Cupid had selected for his affection.

The counters and shelves were overflowing with dilapidated and discarded devices of deception, the snares and pitfalls that had served the purpose of the God of Love in his nefarious business.

"But what does all this mean," I asked, as we looked about the room after my inspection. "Is it possible that you cannot rule your subjects and bring about unions without resorting to all these coarse horse traders' and gamblers' tricks?"

Cupid shrugged his shoulders in admission of the charge.

"But if they are led into the trap by these baits why not at least let them continue to enjoy the bliss of undispelled delusion? Why should they be permitted to discard these cloaks of hypocrisy and these spells of enchantment?" I demanded.

"It can't be helped." Cupid sighed as sympathetically as such a heartless little beggar could sigh. "Things will wear out you know and, as soon as they have accomplished their purpose and the holes appear, they are thrown aside. Then the poor things must get along as best they can. That's not for me to worry about — Where are you going? — Say! — you've forgotten your glamour — and your overcoat and your sonnet — "

But the door had slammed behind me and I was again in the honest sunshine, breathing pure air — as pure as air can be in Vanity Fair.

Granny.*

BY FELIX FELLOWS.

THE rain had come in torrents all the morning but, by two o'clock in the afternoon, the hot July sun blazed upon the dripping slopes of the Tennessee mountains, and the handful of mounted bluecoats that trudged heavily up the red clay road growled at the hot vapor rising from the earth which, with the hot rays from above falling upon them, and their long ride of the morning, made further progress almost torture.

The stick chimney of a mountain hut snuggled close against the mountain side, almost hidden from the road by the tall bushes and undergrowth, broke upon the vision of the men almost simultaneously, and a smothered Ah! and speedy tightening of reins sent the tired horses briskly forward.

A sudden break in the bushes that bordered the road showed a rugged path leading up to the hut. With a quick yank of the bridle one of the men wheeled his horse into the path, and then stopped suddenly. There, almost hidden in the brush beside the path, on a rock that benched out from its fellows, sat a girl, and the surprise of the soldiers was reflected on her face. It was a plain face — with rather a large mouth that stood open in consternation, and big blue eyes that stared in wonder — a face that might belong to a woman of anywhere from seventeen to twenty-seven, but a glance down her form to the skirt that cut off at the ankles, and the brown bare feet exposed beneath, took you back to the conclusion of seventeen.

In her lap, her two hands clutched a half-finished yarn stocking, with its bristling knitting-needles, while the ball of yarn lay soaking in a little puddle farther down the slope, where it had rolled unnoticed.

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"Here, girl," called the leader, "have you seen anything of a man about here to-day?"

"M–a–r–n" — she drawled in reply, "hain't seed a m–a–r–n critter terday." Then, a little brighter — "Who be's you-alls a-lookin' fer?"

"A damned rebel scout, — tall fellow, dark hair and eyes. Been chasing him since daybreak, and an infernal chase he has given us too, up these damned slippery hills of yours."

"Nup, hain't seed no critter terday," she reiterated, languidly, stooping to rescue the blue ball, which she proceeded to cleanse by mopping it up and down the side of her homespun gown. "Say" — she drawled — "be you-alls soldiers?"

"Come, girl, who's up yonder at the house?" asked the spokesman, ignoring her question. "Where's the men?"

"Gone–ter–the–war," she drawled. "Pap and Dan lef' a'most a ye'r ago. Hain't seed nuthin' uv em have yer?" and the big eyes took on a wistful expression.

"Come, girl, lead the way, we must search the house."

"Nobody's thar but Granny, and she's asleep."

"Well, don't stand there, move along," commanded the man.

"Dasn't," said the girl, "Granny, she's got the asmer, and she's got one of her bad spells, and I dasn't wake her."

"Come, come, this won't do, move along there; we can't be detained by a Granny or two."

"Wall," said the girl, planting one bare foot on a little elevation of clay and slowly bearing down till the yellow earth oozed up between the toes, "Wall," repeating the operation on another little mound of clay, "if you-alls bound ter do it, ye'll have ter do it alone, 'ca'se I dasn't. But I warns yer not to wake Granny, for it's her spell day and she's bad when yer get her started."

"Well, I guess we can excuse you," said the leader. "Here, John, you hold the horses and we'll go up, — and be sure to keep your eye on that lovely specimen of Southern beauty."

"Say," she drawled, "you-alls go easy, 'ca'se if she wakes up hell'l be a-poppin', shore 'nuf. And when you-alls come back, jes' turn down ther path thar, to the lef', to ther spring, and I'll git you-alls somethin' ter drink."

A laugh broke from the men. "We'll accept," the foremost turned to say, "provided your something is not spring water."

"Naw, 'tain't neither. It's good ole Tennessee corn juice, as Dad says, as good as ever pisened a rattlesnake. Pap allus 'vites strangers ter drink. It's hospertality he says, and, says he, 'Hospertality is the poor man's saving grace.'"

The men were nearing the cabin door, when they heard the voice of the girl in a sort of stage whisper. "S-a-y, you-alls, don't 'sturb ole frozen toes, what's bringin' off her second settin' under that 'ar table, or she'll raise the roof, and that'll wake Granny, and —"

"And we wouldn't be left in peace to enjoy Dad's 'hospertality'," mockingly finished one of the men. "Well, I, for one, say let her sleep, for I'm as dry as a husk." This condition seemed contagious, for the group went cautiously up to the open door, and as cautiously advanced within and began a hurried survey of the place.

The room was sparsely furnished, but bore traces of cleanliness. Its rough home-made table, from underneath which the head of a Dominique chicken protruded, eyeing the intruders with an inquiring twist of her head, was scoured white. Six split-bottom chairs ranged themselves in a straight line along the wall. In the corner farthest from the fireplace stood the four-poster, and the trundle bed was drawn out, with its furnishings piled up to air.

On the bed lay a form, covered, despite the heat of the day, clear to the chin, with a heavy homespun blanket, and on top of that a gay green and yellow patchwork quilt.

Buried deep in the chintz-covered pillow was a head incased in a red flannel night-cap, with the face turned to the wall. The knees were drawn almost to the chin and the hands were hidden beneath the covers.

On a peg, at the head of the bed, hung a homespun dress, and beneath it, on the floor, stood a pair of stiff, solid-looking slippers.

Nowhere in the room was there a piece of furniture large enough to conceal a man. A hasty scanning of the walls and ceiling showed no signs of an opening, save the customary hole leading to the loft. With a quiet movement, one of the men lifted a chair beneath this and mounted upon it, only to dismount, convinced, by the network of spiders' webs, that the board covering had not been lifted for months.

"Better look if there is an entrance to it from the outside," suggested one, and the soldier softly tiptoed out and around the house, but came back, shaking his head.

Apparently satisfied, they turned and filed out, and Granny slept on. As they came down the path, the girl clumsily advanced to meet them and conducted them along the "path to the lef'," to a spring that trickled out of the mountain side and formed a pool in a natural basin that had fashioned itself among the rocks, half hidden by the grass. Stooping at one side, she groped about a bit in the shallow water, and brought forth a good-sized jug, securely fastened to the handle of which was a gourd dipper. Placing the jug on the grass, she untied the dipper, tendered it to the nearest man and said: "He'p yerself."

After each had held communion with the dipper a couple of times, she said to one of them: "Jes' hold the gourd while I pour out some fer that 'ar' critter, what's holdin' them hosses. Wouldn't do to slight 'em, cause Dad says slightin' ain't hospertality, and I knows as how Dad would do it ef he wuz here."

She filled the gourd to the brim, then shuffled back to the gap in the road.

"Hyer," was all she said as she presented the drink, "hyer's some of Dad's hospertality."

The soldiers, trooping along behind her, snickered at her crude manner, and the courteous bow with which the gourd was received made her shy, and she fell to her way of smashing the little mud heaps with her foot, and watching the soft clay as it oozed up between her stubby toes. The empty dipper thrust into her hands made no impression on her, so intent did she seem in her pleasing occupation, but a loud "Good-by" brought her to a recognition that they were going.

"Good-by," she called; "if you-alls should meet Dad er Dan, tell 'em me and Granny's so and so, and tell Dad I 'stended ther hospertality."

She stood gazing after them, and something drifted back to her, like a wonder if Dad wouldn't be riled when he heard she had 'stended the hospertality to a lot of bluecoats.

For a long time she gazed down the road, till the last sound of a hoof-beat died away. Then she hastened to the house, and with a glad "Dan, they're gone," broke into a low, gurgling laugh.

"Talk about your bake ovens!" came from the four-poster, and Granny piled out of that bed in a hurry.

But what a grandmother! Six feet in her stockings! And when the woollen night-cap was snatched off, it revealed three days' growth of beard. Next off came the night-gown, and its wearer put it to an unwonted use in mopping away the perspiration from his neck and arms.

From a drawer in the cupboard the girl produced a man's coat, hat and shoes, and with a "Hurry, Dan!" passed them to him.

"There, bless you, girl!" He was already at the door.

"You say they went up the Clayton road? That's good, just as we planned. Now, I'll cut through by the mill, meet Granny with the horse, and to-morrow morning will see me safe back to the lines. It's early yet, and if I hurry, Granny will be able to get back to you before dark."

She followed him down to the gap in the road, and, as his form disappeared through the bushes opposite, took her former seat on the ledge of the rock. Every now and then her eyes swept the road in the direction whence the soldiers had vanished. Still she sat on, and when the last streak of sunlight had disappeared and the shadows deepened so that vision could no longer penetrate the distance, she strained her ears to catch the slightest sound.

Finally, amid the bird calls, the soughing of the wind, and other familiar sounds of nature, she detected the snap of twigs like some one coming through the grass.

Presently the bushes again parted, at the spot where the man had disappeared a few hours before, and she sprang forward to meet a tired little old woman who emerged therefrom.

"Well, he's off" was her first greeting, and "You're sure they didn't come back this way?" added the grandmother.

"Positive," answered the girl, "and ef them Yankees never see a rebel till they ketch Dan, they'll never see one."

At Briny Ranch.*

BY STEPHEN CHALMERS.

LAM BAY, L. I., seemed half-asleep as the sun dropped behind the greenery of the woods and the sea slipped away from the wide, wet sands.

Old James Galt, locally and familiarly referred to as Clammy Jim, sat on a low bench in front of his little wooden shack and smoked a reflective pipe as he watched the ocean drain out of the shimmering sand.

It was Clammy Jim's business to watch the tide twice a day; it had been his father's business, and the business of the Galts for many successive generations. They all had been clam-diggers as far back as the Galt history went.

But, to Clammy Jim, there was more than the inherited commercial instinct in this watching of the tide; Jim thought the Spring ebb, when the skies were clear and the sea calm, one of the wonders of Nature. Familiarity with the phenomena had not bred in his heart the proverbial contempt.

Presently the eyes of Clammy Jim encountered an obstacle on the widening belt of sand in the figure of a man who was coming toward the shack. The silent clam-digger's face expressed neither surprise, concern, nor interest, although a stranger was an event in Clam Bay; but Jim's eyes lazily followed the movements of the new-comer, who was clad in an outing suit, a pair of coarse mountaineering stockings and high-laced boots. He was clean-shaven, with a thoughtful face that was studious behind a pair of spectacles, while his iron-gray hair was nearly hidden by a soft felt hat.

Clammy Jim waited, watched and smoked. The stranger stopped before the grand old man of Clam Bay, and said, with intent to be friendly:

"Wonderful weather, old man."

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"Well," said Jim, dryly, "good weather ain't no more wonderful than a blizzard to them as has studied 'em both. An' as for my bein' an old man, I'll admit I'm not so young as I used to be."

The stranger received both the retort and the rebuke with wide-eyed surprise.

"You are not aware, apparently," said he, icily, "that you are talking to the lessee of these lands."

"I ain't aware, as you says," replied Jim, simply, but with a sudden gleam of suspicion and interest in his eyes.

"Meanin' these, of course," the clam-digger added, nodding his head in the direction of the now wide prairie of sand.

"Meaning these," said the stranger, pointedly.

"What you goin' to do with them?" asked Jim with feigned indifference. "Grow parsley? Or maybe you will be startin' a guinea-pig ranch?"

"Neither," said the well-dressed man, calmly; but it was easy to see that he was nettled by the old man's quiet sarcasm.

"It might interest you to know that I have practically leased all this sandy waste from the Government, as represented by the State Fish and Game Commission. I believe there is money in the clam market, if it is properly handled."

"So," said Clammy Jim quietly, but out of his eyes there shot a momentary glance of resentment against this man who had come to steal the natural heritage of the Galt family and the other families that composed the village of Clam Bay.

"Maybe," said Jim after a while, "Maybe you are the man back of the policeman who came here yesterday with a bunch of summonses, callin' the whole pop'lation o' Clam Bay to appear in court at Jamaica on a charge of trespass an' larceny."

"I will admit it," said the stranger. "I applied for the summonses on the authority of the State Fish Commission. You see, I will not sign the lease until my right to every clam here has been established in open court."

"An' we driven out of our homes an' means o' livelihood," supplemented Jim, as indifferently as if passing the time-o'-day.

"Well," the stranger conceded, "I suppose that might be the case. I hope, however, that in a strictly business matter of this kind there will be no ill-feeling between us."

"Oh, don't worry about that," said Jim, quickly. "We ain't worryin'," he added, with a peculiar chuckle, as he knocked the ashes out of his pipe against the heel of a big sea-boot.

"I am glad to hear it," said the intruder, but he looked puzzled and uneasy, nevertheless.

Jim arose to his feet and cast a keen glance at the drying sand. Then he turned and picked up a spade.

"Hey, Abe!" he roared. "Blow your horn. Time for the round-up! They're nosin' the wind."

In response to this mysterious warning, Abe, a big, raw-boned clam-digger, came from the door of one of the huts and blew a resonant summons out of a shell-trumpet. Presently the little population of Clam Bay trooped out of the huts with knives and spades and baskets.

"Ain't got time to discuss your business, now," said Clammy Jim to the stranger, civilly enough. "I got my own business to attend to now."

He walked, swinging his spade, toward the sands, where the clam-diggers were already at work delving up the clams that were unwise enough to show their noses above the surface. As if struck by an afterthought, Jim paused and called back over his shoulder to the stranger:

"Maybe, as you say you're goin' to own this ranch, you'd like to get an insight into the work. It's mighty interestin'."

The representative of the Fish Commission took the bait and followed the old clam-digger. And, indeed, he found it most interesting. The sands, which an hour before had been covered with water, were now denuded, and stretched for miles to right and left in a monotonous, unbroken plain. As fast as the tide ran out the diggers followed the sea, throwing up blocks of sand wherever the little necks of the clams protruded. Behind the diggers came the women and children with the knives and baskets with which they scooped out the clams and carried them to the huts.

The intruding stranger from the State Fish and Game Commission kept close to Clammy Jim, whose former reserve and apparent resentment began to thaw out. Presently the old clam-digger waxed quite friendly, voluble and instructive to the man who had come to rob Clam Bay of its heritage.

"It's a great life," said Jim with enthusiasm; "an' all o' us simple folks down here live as contented as a clam at high water. We're just one big, happy family, and we all live on this place, which we call Briny Ranch, makin' our daily livin' out o' the round-up."

"Ranch — round-up?"

"Them's only figgers o' speech, as the sayin' is," explained Jim. "I used to be a cowboy in the West, when I was younger'n now. When old man Galt died I came home to take charge of this place an' first thing I did was to christen the place Briny Ranch, because o' the similarity between cattle an' clam-ranchin'.

"Here's your prairie," continued Jim with warmth. "There's your limitless waste, as the sayin' is in books" — waving his hand in the direction of the horizon — "an' twice a day we cowboys go out an' lasso a few clams just to keep the pot and kettle from havin' time to quarrel."

"Most interesting," murmured the intruder, who had been standing a little way apart, with his hands clasped idly behind his back, listening with an amused smile to Jim's talk.

The stranger did not notice, however, that whenever the clam-diggers approached his vicinity they made a detour of several yards as if they recoiled from breathing the same atmosphere.

Presently Clammy Jim moved onward and outward with the tide. The representative of the Fish Commission attempted to follow, and found in that moment that his feet were sunk to the ankles in the soft sand. Having little purchase in this peculiar position, no amount of effort on his part could liberate his feet. He was for all the world like a fly which had just alighted on sticky paper. The most extraordinary circumstance was that not one of the clam-diggers paid the slightest attention to his predicament, until he cried out to old Jim Galt, personally.

"Why," said Clammy Jim, as his eyes wandered from the stranger's head to the place where his feet should have been visible, "I might have warned you about that. There's lots o' them soft spots around here. You gone an' got into a quick-sand!"

Whether the stranger was alarmed or not, he just stared, especially as, having uttered this alarming speech, Clammy Jim turned on his heel and resumed his digging.

"My dear sir!" exclaimed the unwelcome, and now unhappy, man: "You certainly take it as if it were an everyday occurrence."

"It is quite a frequential occurrence," Jim allowed.

"Why don't you help me out?"

Jim turned slowly and stared at the representative of the Fish Commission as if he had not heard aright.

"Help you out?" he echoed. "I'm awful sorry for you, sir, but I'm afraid there ain't no earthly help for you. I told you you was in a quicksand an' if I was to come in an' try to pull you out, we'd both sink."

"Then get a rope — get a rope!" cried the man in the quicksand. Naturally, he felt a little alarmed.

"Ain't no ropes long enough to do it this side o' Jamaica," said Jim, cheerfully.

"Then you mean — you mean — ?"

"Oh, don't drive me to say it!" pleaded Clammy Jim.

"—— that you are going to stand by and see me die a slow, horrible fate?" By this time the stranger was in up to the knees.

Clammy Jim turned away with a peculiar gurgling, which might have arisen from grief, in his throat.

"Stranger," he faltered after a while, "it may console you some to know that quite a number of fellows have died that way hereabout. There was an uncle of mine, now, who was drowned in the sands under my very eyes. I was a boy then, but I mind it like it was yesterday — that face lookin' up ——"

"Thank you," said the stranger quietly. "I have heard enough!"

There was silence for a while. The man in the quicksand, now sunk to the waist, was sullenly eyeing the clam-diggers who, having gathered all the clams they wanted, were returning to the huts. Not one gave more than a curious glance at the sinking man. The prospective lessee of Briny Ranch noticed this peculiar fact and seemed to regard it with just suspicion. It seemed hardly possible that human beings could be so callous.

Presently he found himself alone with Clammy Jim, who was still digging unconcernedly. And the stranger was still sinking, slowly but surely.

"They do say," said Jim, speaking to the victim, but without

turning his head; "they do say it's mighty unlucky for a man to lease his grave afore he is dead."

"He couldn't do it after!" snapped the man in the sand.

Jim leaned on his spade and looked away across the sandy waste.

"That's true," he said, after a thoughtful pause. He really had been thinking that the man in the quicksand had nerve.

"Stranger," said he, "you got lots o' sand."

"I could do with less!" was the unflinching retort.

Jim delved up a big clam and held it up by the neck.

"Now, if you was just that clam, stranger, we could dig you out, hey? Which goes to show that clams ain't the worst-off things in the world."

Again there was silence. The man in the sand was peering through the thickening dusk at the man with the spade, as if he were trying to fathom his game.

"I got a new thought," said Jim presently.

"Preserve it, my friend; preserve it," said the stranger, with much sarcasm.

Jim came to the edge of the quicksand and sat down on an inverted basket. He laid aside his spade and began to talk at length, while he filled a pipe.

"Stranger," said he, "I like your grit. I'm sorry you're going, for you'll be a good man lost. But I sort o' feel that Clam Bay might think I hadn't done my duty if I tried to save you."

"You mean if you didn't try to save me," said the stranger, who was now sunk so deep that his arms were crooked in a last endeavor to stop the downward trend of his body.

"I meant just what I said," Clammy Jim corrected, applying a match to his pipe. "I ain't goin' to try to save you." He emphasized the "try."

"Well," said the man in the sand, bravely, "it won't take very long at the rate I'm sinking."

"An' anyway," Jim supplemented heartlessly, "the tide's just turning. Presently it'll come racin' in an'—an' maybe it'll help you to die quicker."

"Thanks," said the man in the hole.

There was another thought-laden silence. As the stranger's shoulders went under, so that nothing was left visible but his head

and the extremity of each arm, his voice came to Clammy Jim's ears with just a little tremor of awe in it.

"It's not Death I'm afraid of," said he. "It's just the manner of dying. The thought of this beastly sand creeping relentlessly into one's mouth — It's that, you see. . . . And I have a young wife at Asbury. I wish you'd — "

"Stranger," interrupted Jim. "You ain't goin' to die. You see them boys comin' down the sands with a hurricane lamp. They've got a ladder an' spades, too. We'll have you out in a jiffy. But listen to old Jim Galt:

"I thought when I saw you get into that quicksand that you'd get scared an' let up on your game to take Briny Ranch from us poor folks. But you didn't get scared. You've got the sand, all right. Howsoever, I didn't have any intention o' lettin' you go down there among the clams, whether you turned out a white-liver or no. But it seems to me that a man as can face death in a quicksand, as you can, must have some manhood an' a sense o' justice. If Briny Ranch became anybody's property an' we turned employees instead o' landlords, I guess you're the specimen o' manhood we'd work for, an' willingly, too.

"But there's another side to it. (Tuck your chin on top o' this spade, stranger.) It's like this: Your life is all you've got an' Briny Ranch is all we've got. It would be a gain to me if you got drowned, but I'd have a bad conscience. You might gain by takin' Briny Ranch from us, but you'd have a bad conscience, too, seein' as how it wouldn't be no loss if you left it to us. Lo, the poor Indian, gave this stretch o' sand away back in years to the first James Galt for a bottle o' fire-water. It's the property o' the Galt family by right o' trade an' heritage, but the Guv'ment an' the State Fish Commission says it ain't. Howsoever, they haven't bothered us for twenty years until you offered to lease it. If you should happen to change your mind, I won't have any bad news to break to my old wife back in the shack there. As for your young wife at Asbury — don't worry, stranger; you're goin' home to her, with or without the lease o' Briny Ranch, just as it suits you. So far as we simple folks is concerned, here's the boys wi' the spades an' the ladder."

"Tut, tut! Make no promises until you're out o' the hole," the

clam-digger added with a wave of his hand, as the man in the sand began to speak. "You might regret it the moment you was out. This is a square deal, stranger. Just think it over an' do as you please."

Clammy Jim and the stranger relapsed into silence. The other clam-diggers came up and laid the ladder across the quick-sand, so that the ends rested on solid sand. Then two of the men walked out to the middle and dug away the sand from around the capitalist's mouth. They dug merrily away for five minutes; then, throwing away their spades, four brawny arms gripped the stranger and, after a long pull and a strong pull, released the victim of misadventure.

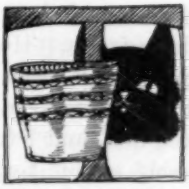
An hour later Clammy Jim and the representative of the Fish Commission were seated before the stove in the Galt shack. The stranger was attired in a suit of borrowed long-shore rags. Both were smoking.

"Well, that's settled," said the capitalist at length. "It'll be a company from now on. There's money in it, but you need a system here. This basket business is too slow. We'll get ponies and sledges with smooth board bottoms. You'll run Briny Ranch and I'll attend to the market. I believe we can make a corner in clams."

"Stranger," said honest Jim Galt, holding out his hand; "you're the luckiest an' the biggest clam I ever dug out o' Briny Ranch."

The Reincarnation of Bud Warner.*

BY HENRY OYEN.



THE pale little man who sat on the bunk-side in the shack on the hill looked at the paper in his hands with staring eyes. The light in the shack was poor, for men do not bring such luxuries as window glass over sixty miles of rough trail to equip a prospect shack with glazed windows. The only light in the room was that which came in through the door, so the pale man on the bunk shifted his position to better distinguish the picture and the head-lines and news-paragraph that went with it. This is what he read:

$2000—REWARD—$2000

A DESPERADO STILL AT LARGE

WELLS, FARGO & CO.'S AGENT AT SULPHUR OFFERS BIG REWARD FOR INFORMATION LEADING TO ARREST OF BUD WARNER, THE TRAIN ROBBER.

Despite the original reward of $1000 offered by the officials of Wells, Fargo & Co. immediately after the robbery of their express car in the big cut near this city, the notorious outlaw, "Bud" Warner, is still uncaught. Actuated by this fact and the urgent necessity of putting an end to the reign of robbery which has prevailed here so long, and of which the said Bud Warner is believed to be the prime instigator, it has been decided to increase the reward offered to $2000. This amount will be paid to the person who furnishes exclusive information upon which the desperado's arrest is effected. As it is believed that Warner is at the present time shielded by friends or confederates, the officials of the company have little doubt that the doubling of the reward will produce the desired results.

The little man in the shack re-read the paragraph again and again. He looked at the date. It was two weeks old. Two thou-

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sand dollars! He had never possessed that much money in all his life. He read the figures again, and they seemed to grow red and burn themselves into his soul.

A noise disturbed him, and with the look of a man caught robbing a friend's home he hastened to slip the paper into a crack in the floor. But the noise was only the wind blowing the door back and forth on its rusty hinges. The little man lay flat on his back in the bunk, completely exhausted from the sudden fright. He was very pale, except where a red spot burned bright in each cheek, and his eyes were shining with the unnatural brightness of fever. He began to cough, and the effort shook and racked him, and left him lying trembling and helpless. He swore feebly at this for, since he had come to live in the little shack on the hillside, the cough which had driven him from the desk in Chicago to exile in the land of sun and sand had been growing less and less frequent.

The doctor had said, "Go to Sulphur and ride west." But west of Sulphur the trails are mixed, and some lead south, into the desert of The Dead Things, where the water is only a myth, and where no honest men go unless they have grown tired of the things of this life. So the little man got lost, hopelessly and completely lost. He rode his horse to death in the first frenzy of fright after discovering his predicament, and finally sat down to stare Death, horrible, parching, inevitable Death, in the face out there in the bright sun. Then out of the dust of the trail had come the man who owned the shack on the hill. That was all the little man remembered, for twelve hours in the sun is not good for the memory of any mortal man. But he woke up after awhile, and the big man who picked him up was feeding him whiskey and rare roast beef in wholly indecent quantities.

He had lain thus for four blank weeks of unconsciousness. The big man had in this time stayed by his side, watching and nursing him with the eyes of a mother caring for her first-born. There had been times when the spirit in the weak frame flickered desperately and nearly went out, but somehow and for some reason the thread hung on. There were nights and days when the big man never left the bunk-side, and there was one night when he rode sixty miles and brought back the powders that eventually cleared the sun-dimmed brain and brought the pale man back to earth.

When the little man was able to sit up and talk he learned that he was in a most isolated shack in the foot-hills of the Lower Sangre de Cristo range, the guest of a man named Smith, whose occupation was prospecting. This the big man told him as he fed him diluted pea soup which had come in cans over the long trail from Sulphur. Also he told him that he was welcome, welcome as the sun, to make his home indefinitely in the shack, and breathe the air "right where God makes it," and get well if it was so willed.

He had stayed, and the rare beef and whiskey, and sun and air, had wrought wonders. He could now on his "good days" potter around the shack, and the cough was gradually diminishing.

The little man again climbed laboriously out of the bunk, and felt in the floor crack for the paper. It was a poor piece of press-work, that picture, but the man laughed as he viewed it.

"Yes, it's him — it's him sure," he said. "It's him — that big beard of his now don't disguise him at all. And he told me his name was Smith!"

A big, bronzed man with a beard came into the shack in the evening. "Hello, Peters, how's the cough today?" he inquired jovially. "That's good, that's good," he continued, as he set about preparing the evening meal. "Did yah sweat any today? Glad to hear yah didn't. I tell you what, Pete, ol' timer, you jest stay with this sanitarium, stay with us 'til the bell rings, an' we'll have your bellows fixed up fit as a bull's. Straight goods. You're gaining every day, getting fleshier, too. Why, you must 'a gained twenty pounds since you come here. The first night you came, Peters, you were just about ready to keel over and play the cloth."

The big man slivered off a pound of bacon, and laughed.

"How you coming along with your prospecting — Smith?" asked the little man. "Find anything worth while today?"

The big man eyes him in a flash, but he answered: "Nothing much, tuh tell the truth, nothing much. Worked on the old prospect hole. Don't expect to find anything that'll pay there for some time."

"Think you'll ever find anything here?" asked Peters.

"Don't know. No telling. Found signs, good signs, when I first came here."

"Never found anything that paid, though?"

"Nope, never did."

After supper Peters said: "Don't see how you can afford to waste your time here—Smith. You could be making good money somewhere else. I don't see how you make money enough even for your tobacco here, don't see how you manage to live on it."

"I don't," said the big man, shortly. "Sometimes we do things and don't care whether it pays or not. Sometimes we *have* to do something, whether we want to or not, or whether it pays or not. Sometimes we want to do things after awhile that we'd ought to done long before. We find that we've been wrong in our ideas of things. We were sure we were right before, but all of a sudden something happens that shows us that we're all wrong and the other fellows are all right. Then we want to do different."

"Did something show you?" asked Peters.

"Well, now, Pete, that ain't just right, you know," was the good-natured rejoinder. "We've all of us, at least those of us who weren't brought up on a milk bottle, had times when we done what wasn't just right; what we afterwards discovered was foolish. As we get a little older we get mellowed, we find that the world isn't so hard to us, and we don't have to be so hard against it. Ever struck you that way, Pete?"

Peters' lips grew into an unlovely straight line.

"I had eight hundred dollars saved once," he said. "It was five years ago, when the doctors were only telling me that I had a weak chest. I was going to make the first payment on a little farm, and get out in the air and live. A friend of mine stole that money."

"Sho, now, that was low down, real low down," commented the big man. "I reckon you kind of feel hard against the world yet, then."

"No one knows how hard," was the answer.

There was no sleep for Peters that night. He saw a picture—a dirty, smutted newspaper cut—ever before him, and the golden figures, $2,000, were burning red before his wide-open eyes. In the morning there was a marked change for the better in his condition. He was apparently full of strength and energy. He walked out in the sun, kicked the blue clay that circled each prospect hole, and whistled cheerfully when he found Smith rigging a windlass.

"Good boy, Pete," said the latter, "you're getting to be as husky as a bad cow-puncher."

The next day, and the next, and the next showed still more remarkable improvement in the condition of the sick man. He was stronger, much stronger, and his high spirits were wonderful to behold. He exhibited a new interest in everything about him, the shack, and the prospect holes, and their location in miles from the nearest town. Finally he learned, without asking one direct question, that if a man would set a straight course due east, through the flat lands of sand and cactus, he would, at the end of an easy day's ride, reach the vicinage of Sulphur.

It was two weeks later that Smith mounted the little bronco that picked up a precarious living about the shack, and rode off into the hills where the cattle ranges were, to secure the beef so necessary to the proper nourishment of Peters.

He was gone three days. When he returned Peters was gone. The little shack was cold and empty, the door was open, and swinging aimlessly on the hinges, the wind blew through mournfully. The big man ran out and called loudly for his guest. He ran to the prospect holes, and peered and called into them, but there was no answer. Presently he found the trail of the little man, and followed it until it ran east into the long trail that led to Sulphur.

"Poor little muzzler," said Smith. "He must 'a got lonesome and started to walk in to Sulphur — started to walk!"

The tired bronco had a short hour's rest. Then he was hurriedly re-saddled and shoved over the Sulphur trail as fast as his legs would carry him.

On the outskirts of Sulphur, Smith met "Windy Sam," sheriff of Sulphur county.

"Funny thing happened last night," said Sam, hastening to live up to the reputation that had given him his name. "Little, measly piece of a lunger came hiking into town with a paper about the Bud Warner reward in his fists. Claimed the reward right away. Said how he'd been living with this here same man whose picture was in the paper in a little shack off somewhere in the Sangre de Cristo. Said the man was prospecting out there for a bluff. Said, 'He's got a beard now, but I know him by his nose

and eyes.' Bughouse he must 'a been. Said his name was Peters."

Smith stumbled appreciatively in his speech. "You got the paper with you, Sam?" he asked, thickly, as if it was only to hide his confusion. Sam dug into a rear pocket. He fished out the dirty, creased paper that Peters had found in the shack. Smith took it and looked at it with interest. "Where's the lunger now, Sam?" he asked.

"Shovelling coal or picking a harp, I don't know which," was the quick answer. "He cashed in immediately after making his spiel." Sam caught a glimpse of Smith's eyes as he spoke.

"Cashed in?" said Smith, dumbly. But the sheriff was eyeing him in a new way.

Suddenly Windy Sam stepped back a yard and pointed his six-shooter very severely at the other.

"By Jing!" he roared suddenly. "An' I would never have known it if the lunger hadn't mentioned the eyes. Put 'em up, Bud Warner, put 'em up high, an' don't try any of your gun tricks on me."

But Bud Warner was not trying to play any tricks. He sat and looked straight at the sheriff.

"You say he died, Sam?" he questioned, as if his credulity was taxed.

"He died." Sam came up closer, with his gun still held out steady before him. "He died; keep your hands up."

"Sho," said the desperado, softly, as his guns were removed. "Sho," he said, looking down the trail, "I was afraid he wouldn't stand it."

The Greatest Nonsense in the World.*

BY JOHN EARL.

ALMER, the king of Norland, who would have been better known to history had there been fewer kings, sent out to every quarter of his kingdom heralds gorgeously arrayed in scarlet, to proclaim with long trumpets: That the King, having pondered long on wisdom, and being thereof wearied, would give one-half his lands, his riches and his jewels — nay, a seat beside him on his throne — to that man who could tell him the greatest nonsense in the world. Within a month from that day, the heralds with a loud flourish made their proclamation, the King would hold his court, and on that day there might appear before him all those who were minded to make trial for the dazzling prize. No man would be excluded, high or low.

Excitement such as was never known before throughout the kingdom ran in the heralds' wake from hamlet to hamlet, town to town. The sages, trembling with anticipation, betook them each one to his tower, and each through his telescope looked out on the fair land of Norland, its turrets and its steeples, its streams, its forests and its vineyards, half of which, with all its opportunities for power and advancement, he was confident would in a month be his. The common people, blind with greed, leaned each one on his mattock in the fields and, open-mouthed, forgot to work, feeling each in his pockets the weight of half the kingdom's gold, — dreaming a similar, although more common, dream. On that day when Almer was to hold his court the procession on the road that led into the palace gates was like a snake whose tail appeared to have no end. There passed into the audience-chamber shuffling wisemen, hobbling peasants, cloaks and jerkins, hoods and hats. The monarch, surrounded by his followers, sat in solitary grandeur

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on the seat which each one hoped, before the day was out, to share. Behind him, through the open windows, gleamed Norland's towers and its spires. Alaskir, the foremost of the sages, who had hurried to be first, that he might have his say before anyone else had had a chance, bowed low before the King.

"The greatest nonsense in the world, my liege," said he, "would be to say that the sun, which arises on us in the morning and withdraws his radiance from us in the evening, does not shine."

Although the multitude craned anxiously it was seen that the King did not move over to make room for the sage beside him on his throne.

"No greater nonsense," he replied augustly from his lofty chair, "than to say that the moon, which is no doubt accountable for such lunacy as thine, does not give forth her beams at night."

Alaskir, again bowing to the earth, withdrew amid the gibes of those who had meant to say the same.

"The greatest nonsense in the world, great King," declared Valder, the next sage, who had succeeded in the struggle to be second, "would be to say that the earth on which we live, whose shape has been proven to us, is not round."

"Great nonsense, truly," said the King, "and yet no greater than to say that the floor on which you stand, whose shape you yourself have proven, is not flat; or to deny that the throne on which you see me sit, to which your wit cannot attain, is high."

The second of the sages drew his hood about his face.

"The greatest nonsense in the world," affirmed Obadimir, the third, whose smile bespoke his confidence that the prize had but to wait till he had spoken, "would be to say that we know where we shall go when we are dead."

"Thou hast said well," replied the King, "and yet my throne is not for thee. As great nonsense as it would be to say — although thy visions of tonight will doubtlessly be ill, — that we know what we shall dream when we sleep."

A fourth among the sages expressed as his opinion that it would be the greatest nonsense in the world for a man to think that he would be relieved from care, — a fifth, to think that love would last.

"Sound folly, also," quoth the King. "As great as to expect that time would end, or that a flame would not go out.

Until the sun went down in a red disk behind the spires the wisemen, jostling, pushing, all with their answers, too numerous to be remembered, crowded forward to the throne; declaring, from among the heights and depths of folly, that it would be the greatest nonsense in the world to call black white, to touch fire and expect not to be burned, to think that water would remain in an inverted tub, to say that a beast could fly, birdlike, in the air, or that a babe could spring, without growing, into a man. To each of which in turn the King still made reply, saying that it were nonsense just as great to call wrong right, to grasp a porcupine and not expect to feel his quills, to think that money would remain in the pockets of a youth, to say that a man could adhere, flylike, to the ceiling with his feet, or that an elephant could tread, without breaking it, upon an egg.

The common people, for a time overawed, interposed their jerkins among the wisemen's cloaks, declaring, among the ebullitions of their ruder wit, that it would be the greatest nonsense in the world for him who had sowed bean-seed to expect from thence peas, for a lame gooseherd to hope to catch his geese, to say that a woman could be stopped from talking, or that a man could live at peace with his mother-in-law. To which, in kind, the monarch yet made answer, saying that it would be folly just as great for him who had not sowed at all to expect to reap his fields, for a lame goose to hope not to be caught, to say that a hen could be deterred from cackling, or that the screech-owl and sweet slumber could consort.

"The greatest nonsense in the world, my liege," said an old man whose voice had not been heard, "would be to say we shall not die."

"That also would be nonsense, truly," said the King, "— and yet no greater than to say we do not live!

"There is nothing in all that you have said," he declared with a sigh of weariness, "that I cannot match with nonsense just as great."

A silence fell on all, and the room grew gray with gathering twilight, for everyone both great and small had spoken — excepting

Nomo, the dwarf, whom no one had considered, who sat on the lowest step of the throne.

"My liege," said he in a voice which made all start and stare to hear, "*I* can tell thee the greatest nonsense in the world!"

"Can'st thou, indeed, good dwarf?" said Almer. "Then tell it me, for I have come to the conclusion that there is no one piece of nonsense that has not a parallel, in all the world."

The dwarf rolled and rocked his mirthful sides.

"There is no nonsense greater," he declared, "in the whole earth."

"Then make haste to tell it, brave Nomo," said the King, "for in truth I cannot wait to hear."

The dwarf clapped his hands and laughed aloud with glee.

"It is such great nonsense," he affirmed, "that I must whisper it in thine ear."

The King leaned down his ear to hear it, and his laughter drove the bats from their steeples in the gloom outside the windows and shook the very throne.

"There is no nonsense," he declared, when he could speak for merriment, "that equals this in all the world. Let Nomo," he commanded, "be lifted up beside me on the throne, and let the wisest of the sages be dressed in motley and sit upon the lowest step. Let Nomo be given half the lands and jewels of the kingdom, for such rare nonsense I had not hoped to live to hear. Whisper it again, great dwarf," he said, "that all the court may hear!" — and Nomo, beside him on the throne, again whispered, loudly, to the King.

"*That thou art a fool!*" said he.

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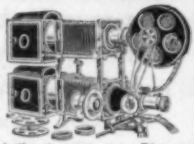

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